

Black-Owned and Operated Hospitals in the Detroit Metropolitan Area during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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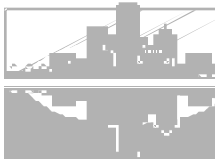
Winter Newsletter 1998

University of Michigan Medical School

# The Archive

Documenting the Historical Experiences of African Americans in Southeastern Michigan with regard to Health Care, the Health Professions, and the Health Sciences

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## Black-Owned and Operated Hospitals in the Detroit Metropolitan Area during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### Mercy General Hospital Detroit, Michigan (1917-1976)



#### Founders:

Drs. David and Daisy Northcross

#### Locations:

73 Russell St (20 beds)

688 Winder (34 beds)

2929 W. Boston Boulevard (50 beds)

After fleeing the Klu Klux Klan in Montgomery, Alabama, Drs. David and Daisy Northcross settled in Detroit, MI, intent on rebuilding their medical practice and providing medical care for Detroit's African American community. Initially, they met with other physicians who formed the Allied Medical

Society, precursor to the Detroit Medical Society, hoping to become a part of the Society's endeavor to open a hospital facility for African Americans.

The Northcrosses, having operated a hospital in the South, brought much administrative knowledge to the table, and they finally chose to strike out on their own and succeeded in opening Detroit's first African American hospital in 1917.

Opened mostly because the doctors needed a place to care for patients who were too sick to return home, the hospital located at 73 Russell St. eventually contained 20 beds. Because of demand for care, the hospital soon outgrew this limited space and relocated to 688 Widner St. This property was finally demolished in order to make way for the construction of I-75 expressway.

There were pressures to close the hospital at this point, but the Northcrosses took the \$400,000 they made selling the Widner property and built a new 50 bed facility at 2929 W. Boston. Pressure from Blue Cross forced the hospital to convert to a methadone clinic, and then an abortion clinic. Before a final conversion to a mental facility, someone

firebombed the establishment, bringing to an end the life of Mercy General Hospital.

### Dunbar Memorial Hospital Detroit, Michigan (1918-1924)



#### Founders:

A group of physicians including Dr. J.W. Ames; Dr. Albert Johnson; Dr. George Bundy; Dr. R. Beck; Dr. Alfred E. Thomas, Sr.; Dr. Alexander Turner.

#### Location:

580 Frederick St. (27 beds)

Dunbar Hospital was the result of planning by a bi-racial committee

intent on establishing an institution that could serve the African American population of Detroit. In addition to 27 beds, the facility included an

operating room. In 1924, shortly before moving and becoming Parkside Hospital, the facility was expanded to 40 beds.

Playing crucial roles in the newly opened facility of 1918 were Drs. James Ames and Alexander Turner, the Medical Director and Chief of Surgery, respectively. Dr. George Bundy, is believed to have performed deliveries at Woman's Hospital, even though he was denied admitting privileges there.

## Parkside Hospital Detroit, Michigan (1928-1962)



### Founders:

Dr. Robert Greenidge; Dr. DeWitt T. Burton; Dr. Henry Owen; Dr. Canute Constable; Dr. Julius Graham; Dr. W.A. Thompson; Dr. Alexander Turner; Dr. Alfred Thomas, Sr.

### Location:

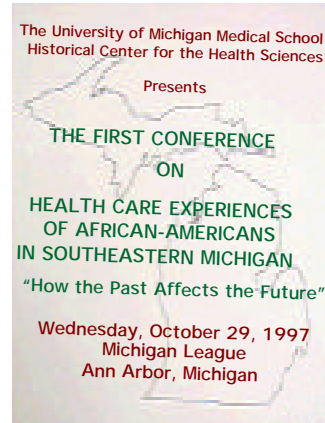
Brush and Illinois (54 beds)

In an attempt to compete with majority hospitals and to change the perception of health care in the African American community, Dunbar Hospital relocated across from Harper Hospital and changed its name to Parkside.

Spearheading the activity was Dr. Robert Greenidge. Following an incident where Dr. Greenidge experienced racism first-hand at the Florence Crittenton Home (a maternity facility), Greenidge felt it necessary to help the African American community organize itself and capitalize upon its strengths. Parkside was intent on establishing itself as a respected provider of health care services. However, the only patients ever sent there from Harper

Hospital were those considered to be terminal. With a reputation as "the place to go when you die," the hospital finally succumbed to pressures to vacate. The hospital was torn down in 1962 to make room for the expansion of Detroit Receiving Hospital and the general development of the Detroit Medical Center.

## October 29, 1997 Conference



The University of Michigan Historical Center for the Health Sciences (HCHS) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation sponsored the first conference on the African American Health Care Experience. The conference was held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and was comprised of a series of talks, including a presentation of the results from the first phase of the Kellogg Project, panel discussions on the historical context and policy implications of the managed care system, and a pre-planning session for the upcoming National Conference to be held in the City of Detroit in the Winter of 1999.



Dr. Charles Wright; Ms. Dorothy Mottley, RN; Ms. Fanny Starks, RN; Ron Amos; Linda Strodman, UM Professor of Nursing; and Dr. Lionel Swan (left to right). Health Care Experiences Conference, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor: 29 October 1997.

## Kellogg Project Update

The Project has moved to a new location. Our new address is: 300 North Ingalls Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 48109-0489. The second phase of interviewing will begin this winter and will focus on interviewing additional physicians, administrators, nurses, others from various health professions and ethnic backgrounds, non-traditional health care providers (folkhealers, spiritualists, ministers, etc.), patients, and others who contributed to African American health care during the 1940-60s.

## Upcoming Issues

A quarterly newsletter will be produced featuring the history of several Black-owned and operated hospitals in the Detroit Metropolitan area during this century, along with providing project updates, and other relevant information on issues affecting the health care of African Americans. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to mail them to:

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